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FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7058
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE 6673
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE 1671
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAY 0600
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE 3751
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE 2557
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE 0701
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL IMMEDIATE 2352
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0365
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UN HEALTH RAPPORTEUR SIDES WITH GOE ON SPRAYING

11. (SBU) Summary: United Nations Rapporteur for Human Health Rights Paul Hunt visited Ecuador May 14-18 at the invitation of the GOE to conduct a "non-scientific" study of the impact of Colombia's aerial fumigation program on Ecuadorian residents in the border region. Hunt met with residents, NGO representatives, and local officials in three small communities in the Sucumbios province, and discussed development and health issues with GOE officials including FM Espinosa. Before departing he told the press that the GOC should permanently end spraying of glyphosate due to credible evidence that aerial fumigations had negatively impacted the physical and mental health of border residents. He also expressed concern over the poor state of healthcare in Ecuador's border region. Hunt is expected to deliver a formal report to the UN Human Rights Council sometime this summer. Foreign Minister Maria Espinosa touted Hunt's comments as a "victory" for Ecuador, and said she would discuss Hunt's preliminary findings with Colombia Foreign Minister Fernando Araujo during his May 28 visit to Quito. End Summary.

Taking Ecuador's Side

12. (U) Hunt told the press on May 18 that there is credible evidence to suggest that aerial dissemination of glyphosate had negatively impacted the physical and mental health of Ecuadorians along the border. He publicly urged the Colombian government not resume aerial fumigations until it could clearly prove that glyphosate does not negatively impact public health. Hunt also expressed concern over the lack of an adequate healthcare infrastructure and sufficient GOE presence in the border region. He is expected to deliver his full report to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

UN Rapporteur Explains Mission to Diplomatic Missions

13. (SBU) Earlier on May 18, Hunt briefed interested members of the dipcorps about the background to his visit, and hinted at his preliminary findings without spelling them out. Hunt explained that his May 14-18 visit was to ensure the basic human right to the highest attainable standard of health for Ecuador's northern border residents. He noted that while he had reviewed the CICAD study and spoken with representatives from the OAS, PAHO, and UNDPC before traveling to Ecuador, his research was not scientific. Hunt also denied that he would be the international representative to the tripartite

commission studying the issue.

¶4. (SBU) Hunt said that he had met during his visit with Foreign Minister Maria Espinosa, Minister Coordinator for Internal and External Affairs Fernando Bustamante, and MFA Director of International Cooperation Ambassador Carlos Jativa to discuss conditions in the northern border region and the GOE response (namely Plan Ecuador). Prior to announcing his findings to the press, he intended to brief FM Espinosa privately.

¶5. (SBU) Hunt recounted meetings in three communities in the Sucumbios province where residents, NGO representatives, and local residents shared concerns over the negative impact of glyphosate on their health, crops, and environment. Hunt expressed shock over Ecuador's "historic neglect" of the region, and noted that the lack of government services had left residents vulnerable to health problems, likely exacerbating the glyphosate issue.

¶6. (SBU) Hunt acknowledged as positive Colombia's increased efforts to manually eradicate coca plants, and recognized that the issue was complicated by the adverse health effects of narco-processing in the region. He emphasized his mandate is exclusively focused on the human right to health and said that public policies by governments in the region (read Colombia) did not appear to take this human right into proper account. Hunt stressed the importance of dialogue and cooperation between Ecuador and Colombia, and lamented Colombia's decision not to permit him to visit the Colombian side of the border, where spraying took place. Hunt noted the absence of any Colombian government representative at the briefing, and said his offer to brief the Colombian Ambassador before sharing his findings publicly had been refused.

Espinosa Claims Victory; Prepares for Araujo Visit

¶7. (U) Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Maria Espinosa on May 18 cited Hunt's comments as representing a "great victory" for the GOE's position against aerial fumigation within 10 km of the Ecuadorian border. She said that the GOE was confident that the GOC would be open to discuss the results of the report, and expressed optimism that the GOC would take responsibility for the damage caused by aerial fumigations. Espinosa and Colombian Foreign Minister Fernando Araujo are expected to discuss the issue during their proposed May 28 meeting in Quito.

COMMENT

¶8. (SBU) Hunt's visit and findings are already being touted by the GOE as vindication of its position, for domestic consumption. FM Espinosa will undoubtedly seek to press Araujo for public concessions on the issue.

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